

THE TRIPLE NEXUS APPROACH IN HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Relief Canada (IRC) is grateful for the opportunity to present our position on the Triple Nexus approach. This comprehensive framework combines humanitarian aid, development, and peacebuilding to address the complex needs of communities in fragile and conflict-affected areas. While some have raised concerns regarding the potential impact of this approach on humanitarian principles, IRC firmly believes that — when implemented thoughtfully and strategically — the Triple Nexus can significantly enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of aid efforts.

OVERVIEW OF THE APPROACH

The Triple Nexus approach strives to harmonize humanitarian aid, development, and peacebuilding initiatives, recognizing their interdependence and the need to address them concurrently. This framework champions resilience and sustainability by seamlessly integrating these elements to foster communities that can weather crises and maintain long-term development gains. At its core, the approach strongly emphasizes community-driven solutions by involving stakeholders and decision-makers and empowering community members to become partners and key players in implementation. Grassroots and community-centered peacebuilding efforts are aimed at fostering social cohesion rather than high-level political negotiations, ensuring interventions are relevant and sustainable.

“Humanitarian, development, and peace actions all have a role to play in many crises: humanitarian response to save lives and protect people, development assistance to address multi-dimensional structural challenges, and peace action to ensure that countries can sustain peace, i.e., prevent the outbreak, escalation, continuation, and recurrence of conflict. That is why in conflict-affected and protracted crisis contexts, ensuring coherence, complementarity, and collaboration across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is so important to realize rights, reduce needs, vulnerabilities, and risks, and address drivers and

underlying causes of conflict over the long term. A sequential approach has shown not to be an adequate solution, and synchronous humanitarian, development, and peace actions are generally considered more effective.”¹

BENEFITS OF THE TRIPLE NEXUS APPROACH

The Triple Nexus approach underscores the effectiveness of localized, community-driven peacebuilding initiatives, exemplified by IR's efforts in fostering trust and reducing conflict through grassroots dialogue and cooperation. Some of the benefits of this approach include:

- **Increased Coordination:** Enhanced coordination between different stakeholders (Governments, NGOs, communities, etc.) and initiatives achieve more significant long-term changes and more efficient use by avoiding duplication of efforts.
- **Enhanced Sustainable Development:** Linking short-term projects, like emergency response, with long-term development initiatives, allows for a more conscious approach to effectively using resources. This is particularly important as needs continue to grow and funding fluctuates.
- **Increased Social Cohesion and Resilience:** By addressing immediate needs, fostering inclusive dialogue, and promoting equitable development, the triple nexus approach helps to build trust, reduce conflicts, and create a supportive environment where communities can thrive and withstand future challenges. Moreover, this approach fosters community ownership of programming, which is integral to sustainability.

For example, in Kenya, Islamic Relief implemented a small-scale triple nexus program with funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. This program sought to address tensions surrounding resource-based conflicts by developing platforms for dialogue, including peace committees, as well as engaging in livelihood activities and natural resource management support. As a result, the frequency and pattern of conflict between communities has subsided; the peace committees established a conflict early warning system; looted assets have been returned to their owners; and cross-community communication was strengthened.

¹ Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 'Issue Paper: Exploring Peace within the Humanitarian-Development- Peace Nexus', IASC Results Group 4 on Humanitarian-Development Collaboration (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, October 2020), <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2020-10/Issue%20paper%20-%20Exploring%20peace%20within%20the%20Humanitarian-Development-Peace%20Nexus%20%28HDPN%29.pdf>.

TRIPLE NEXUS APPROACH IMPLEMENTATION

Islamic Relief has successfully implemented triple nexus programs in various countries, demonstrating the potential of this approach to achieve positive outcomes. One example is in northern Pakistan, where communities faced severe water access issues since 2005. The IR Pakistan team addressed the problem by creating an open channel for pipelines, repairing them, and building sustainable infrastructure. Initially, government efforts, like constructing a small dam, failed due to muddy water blockages. The IR Pakistan team's solution required conflict-sensitive strategies and peacebuilding measures to manage local disputes and foster collaboration. Despite initial resistance and criticism, the team facilitated dialogues among community members, engineers, and officials, building trust and uniting the communities. The holistic implementation of this approach not only resolved the water crisis but also strengthened community resilience and cooperation, highlighting the importance of engaging stakeholders for long-term success.² Our implementation of the Triple Nexus Approach emphasizes community-based peacebuilding efforts, as seen in our initiatives in conflict-affected regions, where local dialogue has resolved community disputes and built social cohesion, distinctly different from politically driven peacebuilding strategies.

Another example is the "Integrated Community Stabilization Program" (ICSP) implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in the Central African Republic (CAR). The ICSP provided immediate humanitarian aid by offering emergency shelter, food, and essential non-food items to displaced populations and conflict-affected communities, ensuring their basic needs are met during crises. At the same time, the program focused on sustainable development by rebuilding vital community infrastructure such as schools, health centers, and water systems. These efforts aimed to revive local economies and improve access to essential services, laying a robust foundation for long-term development.

Peacebuilding was integral to the ICSP's approach, involving facilitating community dialogues and mediations to resolve conflicts, foster social cohesion, and build mutual understanding among different groups. Capacity-building initiatives trained local leaders and community members in conflict resolution skills, empowering them to manage disputes independently and promote lasting stability. Furthermore, the program supported inclusive governance by establishing local structures that ensure

² S. Brown and R. Mena (2021) A review of the triple nexus approach in discourse and practice: with a focus on Islamic Relief's triple nexus programme. Birmingham, UK. Islamic Relief Worldwide.

representation from all community sectors, amplifying marginalized voices, and promoting equitable development.³

CRITICISMS OF THE TRIPLE NEXUS APPROACH

Several criticisms have emerged due to the relatively recent implementation of the Triple Nexus approach. The following is Islamic Relief's identification and analysis of the two major criticisms:

- **Compromise of Neutrality and Impartiality:** The primary concern with the triple nexus is that it could compromise the principles of neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian organizations. Critics often interpret peacebuilding as high-level political negotiations, which they argue could entangle humanitarian efforts with political agendas. However, this interpretation is not representative of the community-based peacebuilding that IRC practices. Our peacebuilding efforts focus on social cohesion, driven by the needs identified by the communities themselves. This approach ensures that peacebuilding activities are impartial and rooted in the community's interests, rather than serving external political objectives. In general, actions should focus more on positive peacebuilding (the attitudes, institutions, and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies) than on supporting activities aimed at achieving negative peace (the absence of violence or fear of violence), as differentiated by Galtung in 1964.⁴
- **Financial and Programmatic Focus:** Another primary concern is that the addition of development and peacebuilding may reduce humanitarian aid's financial and programmatic focus. However, as mentioned above, this holistic approach seeks to use resources more effectively, achieving a greater humanitarian impact by addressing the underlying causes and interconnected issues of poverty, crisis, and conflict. This also leads to achieving more remarkable results concerning the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), creating resilient communities where humanitarian aid is less and less necessary.

CONCLUSION

Islamic Relief Canada strongly believes in the potential of the Triple Nexus approach to transform communities in Africa. We urge Canada to embrace and invest in this approach, ensuring that aid efforts are practical and used appropriately to help societies

³ Community Stabilization Approach, Transition and Recovery Division, IOM.
<https://www.iom.int/community-stabilization>

⁴ Galtung, John (1964). "An Editorial" Journal of Peace Research, 1 (1), 1-4.

break out of the cycle of constant humanitarian need. This approach aims to achieve self-sustainability and resilience by holistically addressing humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding needs.